



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH HERTEL  
DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Oct. 25, 2021

**CONTACT:** Bob Wheaton  
517-281-1701  
[WheatonB@michigan.gov](mailto:WheatonB@michigan.gov)



## **Neighbors help neighbors as Benton Harbor pulls together to provide free bottled water**

***State of Michigan continues response with help of community partners***

LANSING, Mich. – Volunteers in Benton Harbor are continuing to step up to make sure that city residents have access to bottled water.

Throughout the weekend and into today, a partnership of local and state volunteers handed out free water at distribution sites and by delivering to residents who are homebound or lacking in transportation.

Through Sunday, the state and its partners had distributed 88,295 free cases of water to Benton Harbor residents.

-MORE-

An example of the can-do spirit occurred Sunday at Brotherhood of All Nations church, where water distribution volunteers and other community members made sure every bottle that was available went to residents when it looked like there would be water left over.

"The community leaders and the volunteers really pulled together," said Dashuna Robinson, an assistance payments supervisor at the MDHHS office in Berrien County and a coordinator for the water distribution. "Bishop James Atterberry from the church, city officials, school board members, and other community members were getting the word out by phone, on social media and in person. Mayor Marcus Muhammad went live on Facebook. Residents supported our efforts by picking up water for their elderly relatives. Our volunteers stayed past the designated 6 p.m. closing time, and by the end of the day every case of water had gone to residents. It was a successful distribution!"

The Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor hosted its first water distribution site on Saturday.

"We are proud to have the Club serve as a water distribution site to help meet the needs of our families and our greater community," said Mackenzie Kastl, chief executive officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor. "Boys & Girls Club staff members worked side-by-side with community volunteers to give out more than 2,100 cases of water. It's really about neighbors helping neighbors and we are happy to do our part."

Delivery of water has ramped up since last Wednesday.

From Oct. 20 through Saturday October 23, Berrien County Health Department along with multiple community partners delivered 2,056 cases of water to 545 homes in Benton Harbor for homebound residents or those without transportation.

Free bottled water is being provided by the state as residents are being encouraged to use bottled water for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods and mixing powdered infant formula.

This action is part of an accelerated, across-the-board effort to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water while the city replaces all lead service lines. This collaborative effort includes the City of Benton Harbor, the Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

-MORE-

Upcoming distribution will occur:

**Tuesday, Oct. 26**

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Self-service)
- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Ave., noon-2 p.m.
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Ave., 4-6 p.m.

**Wednesday, Oct. 27**

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 1-3 p.m.

**Thursday, Oct. 28**

- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Ave., 10 a.m.-noon.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe St., 4-6 p.m.
- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 4.-6 p.m.

**Friday, Oct. 29**

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller St., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Self-service)

Additional dates and locations for bottled water pick up will be added to make sure community needs are met. Information will be posted on [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

MDHHS is engaging in a long-term effort to eliminate lead action level exceedances, educate communities on the effects of lead in drinking water, and remove lead service lines. This collaborative effort includes the City of Benton Harbor, the Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

For questions about lead, MDHHS can be reached at 866-691-5323 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

*Pictured above is a Boys & Girls Club employee reaching for a case of water to load into a resident's trunk.*

###